

# Visual Arts as Critical Tool for Indigenous Orthopedic Therapy among the Akans of Ghana

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## Abstract

*Indigenous orthopaedic therapy often referred to in indigenous circles as bone setting is a specialised branch of traditional medicine which is quite popular among the indigenes in Ghana. Large portions of the Ghanaian population believe that bone setters have the ability and knowledge to cure various types of fractures faster than Western scientific treatment. The study seeks to describe the tools and materials used in indigenous orthopaedic therapy and classifies them into visual art forms. It also aimed at assessing the specific roles visual art plays in the indigenous orthopaedic therapeutic processes. The case study approach under the Qualitative research method was adopted for the study. Observation, and interview were instruments used to collect data from the centre visited. The population for the study comprised orthopaedic centre from an Akan Region of Ghana, patients, and cured patients from the selected indigenous orthopaedic centre. The study revealed that, visual art forms namely body painting, metal sculpture, carving, textiles, and calabash art play significant roles in the treatment processes. It is therefore recommended that the visual art forms employed in the therapy processes be codified, documented, and developed into a manual for art education.*

**Keywords:** Visual arts, Orthopaedic therapy, Indigenous, Akan.

## 1.0 Introduction

Indigenous Orthopaedic therapy is a specialised branch of traditional medicine quite popular among the indigenes in Ghana. It is often referred to in indigenous circles as bone setting. Bone setters and other practitioners of folk medicine still command great popularity in many developing countries, where qualified doctors are scarce, and disease is prevalent. Bone setting in Ghana is quite popular and is patronised by large sections of the community because of the claim that the bone setters are known to have the capacity and expertise to repair various kinds of fractures faster than Western scientific medicine. This assertion is corroborated by Tijssen (1982) who stated that, patients with various types of fractures preferred conventional bone setting to hospital therapy because, in their opinion, the traditional procedure minimizes deterioration of muscles and joints and reduces the lengths of immobilization. Darimani (2007), states in his thesis that, the traditional bonesetter takes care of sprains, dislocations, simple and complex fractures. He further explains that the bones are often manipulated by applying splints to the area around the fracture or wound. Herbs are also applied to the affected area amidst incantation. This description gives some indications of the role played by the arts in the

therapeutic process. Among the art forms listed by Darimani (2007) are splints which are materials and objects of Sculpture; herbs which in some cases contain clay which is a material for Ceramics. Incantations are also mentioned and are grouped under Verbal Arts. In some cases, fabrics are used to bandage the affected areas. The bandage however falls under Textiles.

The Statement made by Darimani (2007), describes the skills employed by the indigenous bone therapists in their healing process. The statement also highlights the tools and materials the indigenous practitioners used in their activities and the category of art forms the tools and materials fall under. The statement however, fell short of categorising the therapeutic process under diagnoses, treatment and rehabilitation. It is important to note that, this categorisation allows for a more detailed analysis of the healing procedure. The categorisation will define the role played by art in the therapeutic process better. Art is a universal language that cuts across social barriers. Irrespective of the elements that differentiate the art of one society from the other, art has the capacity to universally communicate to audience and viewers from every social background. This study discusses the concept of art and defines visual art operationally. The study further looks at African arts and discusses some major African visual art forms. These art forms serve as tools for transmitting and preserving the values and traditions of the society including healing. Art historians often point to cave painting as the earliest art. Archaeologists disagree. Archaeologists maintain that the concept of art arose much later and prefer to focus on paintings as evidence of early human culture. Even if not all images are works of art, the capacity to create them is one area where creativity originates (Getlein, 2002). Anthony Caro, a contemporary British sculptor, claimed that all work is essentially Neolithic or Palaeolithic, depending on whether the artist feels the need to pile stone or spread soot and grease on cave walls (Beardsley & Livingstone, 2002). This was in reference to cave painting where the most impressive and hunting works were discovered in the Stone Age.

According to Getlein (2002), people have considered different things to be art at different times and at different places. In his view the definition of art is largely influenced by historic moment as well as the culture of the people. Getlein expresses this feeling in the following words, “the art of our own time has become so diverse that if you were to visit all the galleries in major cities, you would be hard pressed to come up with a definition that covers everything you would see”. Adams (1994) describes art as a vital and persistent aspect of everyday life. He describes it as an inborn trait that enables a child for instance to trace images in dirt or sand and decorate just about anything from their own faces to walls of their houses. In the opinion of Adams, creating art is a continuation and development of the child’s inborn impulse. This takes on different meaning in the adult whose motive at this stage is the wish to leave behind after death a product of value by which to be remembered. During the Middle Ages, art was equated to craft because in a sense both had to do with practical skills. The art of the period comprised forging a sword, painting a picture and carving a cabinet. The Renaissance period however, saw painting, sculpture and architecture being recognised as more elevated forms of art. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, painting and sculpture were grouped together with music, dance and poetry (and sometimes landscape gardening) as the fine arts on the principle that they were similar kinds of activity that had no function other than to be beautiful or expressive (Getlein, 2002).

In trying to understand whether something is art or not, Getlein (2002) puts forward a number of questions we are likely to ask ourselves. He enumerates the following as being among the most frequently we are likely to ask; “who made it? Is it beautiful? Does it depict appearances faithfully? What does it mean? Such questions raise interesting issues about the nature of art and the value systems used to judge artistic quality”. Visual Art is a modern but inaccurate umbrella term for a broad category of art which includes a number of artistic disciplines from various sub-categories (*Encyclopaedia of Art Education, n. d.*). Its wide scope makes it very difficult to attempt a concise definition. The definitions of visual Art according to *Encyclopaedia of Art Education* usually encompass the following: Fine Arts, Contemporary Art, Decorative Arts and Others. *Encyclopaedia of Art (n. d.)* describes Visual arts as visible forms of art, including those created through drawing, painting, sculpture, printing, photography, and cinema. Visual art is also a term that is frequently used to describe design and textile work. English online explains that visual arts have changed over the centuries. Whereas during the Middle Ages artists created paintings, sculptures or prints and became famous, today visual arts applies to many different forms. *Encyclopaedia of Art Education, (n. d.)* categorises Visual Art into specific branches and describes them as follows:

#### **i. Fine Arts**

Fine arts are under the umbrella term of visual arts. Drawing, painting, printmaking, and sculpture are among of these, as are related pursuits like graphic design, manuscript illumination, book illustration, calligraphy, and architecture.

#### **ii. Contemporary Arts**

Modern art genres like assemblage, collage, mixed media, conceptual art, installations, happenings, performance art, as well as disciplines based on film, like photography, video art, and animation, are also included in the visual arts. High tech skills like computer graphics and giclee prints are also included in this set of activities.

#### **iii. Decorative Arts and Craft**

The term "visual arts" as a whole also refers to a variety of ornamental art forms and crafts, such as ceramics and studio pottery, mosaic art, mobiles, tapestry, glass art etc.

#### **iv. Others**

Applied art disciplines like graphic design, fashion design, and interior design are occasionally included in broader conceptions of visual art. New forms of body art may also be included in the broad category of visual arts. Body painting, face painting, and tattoo art are a few examples. Although fascinating, African art is so diverse and broad that it is impossible to give it a thorough analysis in the parameters of this study. The information below however captures a brief history of African Art, discusses its anthropological context and highlights the popular art forms associated with her cultural practices. As compared with

western intellectual history, one can safely say that the systematic study of African art is in its infancy in terms of its scope and depth. Arnold (1993) supports this claim by arguing that, students of African Art History have not taken the trouble to question the aesthetic and artistic dimensions of their traditional art-historical data seriously. Arnold believes that these questions posed by art historians over the years have received and continue to receive comparatively little scholarly attention. He reinforces this assertion in the following words: “traditional art-historical and critical perspectives have been subordinated to the gathering and organization of masses of minutely particularized behavioural information” (Arnold, 1993). This assertion is debatable and Arnold is the first to admit that, modern scholars have sought to approach African Art from a more pragmatic point of view. Arnold (1993) opines further that:

For traditional Africa, the accumulated knowledge of the past, embodied in the "formulae" in all facets of culture, constituted an acculturative and cohesive mechanism of great potency, to be altered only at the risk of very serious consequences. In particular, art served to clarify and concentrate group identification as well as to strengthen the sense of community that functioned as the sole setting in which individual identity was even imaginable or relevant.

This quote suggests that meaningful study of African Art should be based on a fair and in-depth knowledge and appreciation of the culture and practices of the people. In the absence of written documents in some cases, Warren and Ingram (1989) opine that “Africans often preserve their beliefs and values and conveyed them from generation to generation”. As further explained, “the significance of each work is derived not merely from its tangible form or its aesthetic merit, but equally from the concepts and beliefs that it embodies”. It is important therefore to emphasise that African Art is primarily a conceptual, not a representational art form. For instance, the African does not necessarily attempt to reproduce naturalistically what he sees; rather he is carving ideas and concepts.

Unfortunately, any discussions on African Art or indeed of most aspects of traditional African culture in the words of Arnold (1961) depend heavily upon; the usually biased reports of missionaries and colonial administrators, ethnocentric and racist culture-history theories and reconstructions, unwarranted extrapolations from the known to the unknown and other more-or-less imaginative inventions. Cultural data associated with the objects were dismissed as irrelevant to their “understanding” or “appreciation” of what was acknowledged to be high artistic achievement.

This development has posed a great challenge to the interpretation of African Arts and has hampered its impact at the world stage in the cause of time. Despite these challenges, Shell beads have had a tremendous impact on world culture and history. This is particularly true of African art history. It is virtually unassailable that Africa is the origin of human history. African art's beginnings predate written history and have been preserved through the ages. While fashioned for a necklace, which is 75,000 years old, was found in a cave at the southernmost tip of South Africa, rock art dating back centuries has also been discovered there (African Art

History, n. d.). Willet (1989) opines that, the richly variegated sculpture produced in Africa has so far contributed the most to the cultural heritage of humanity. According to him, African sculpture is a highly advanced and exceedingly profound art form with a long history. The earliest sculptures discovered, according to research on African art history, are from Nigeria and date to around 500 BC. Although African Art (n. d.) notes that there haven't been any recent archaeological digs, this prevents us from knowing how old African art is, and the fact that the materials used to make art are purely disposable means that a staggering amount of things have decayed through time. African Art (n. d.) also discusses the importance placed on Central African art history for two reasons: first, the tribes living there were the most settled in all of Africa, and second, they created figurative sculptures that Western collectors could most readily recognize as "art," according to their definition. The human figure is the primary subject, and strong formal aspects and strong design elements were demonstrated to create balance and harmony. These formal design characteristics, when coupled with a potent spirituality and expressive fervour, drew artists in the early 20th century to experiment with new dynamics in visual art, and they later served as the cornerstone of contemporary abstraction.

Many traditional African sculptures are now well recognized for their formal excellence, and their influence on the development of 20th-century Western art is well documented. These facts have frequently given the original African forms a point of entry, highlighting their frequently startling similarity to relatively well-known contemporary Western explorations in artistic structure, concept, and materials. The narrow range of formal categories in which the shapes are realized is often hidden by the richness of African sculpture's inventiveness. The flexibility given to individual artists for "personal expressions" is shown to be quite constrained as one becomes familiar with the variety of conceivable variants within any localized idiom (Arnold, 1993). Arnold (1993) expresses the opinion that African sculpture's "content" has certainly not received the attention it deserves. For the purposes of this discussion, content is referred to as one aspect of the work of art's effective power and complex of numerous meanings. It starts with the careful orchestration of materials and methods and goes beyond purely formal features and relatively overt iconographical or metaphorical connotations. It is suggested that careful thought be given to media, their nature, how they are utilized, and what they appear to mean, as one of several potential approaches to content in African sculpture. The oldest rock paintings, which date back 27,000 years, are the oldest known African art form. These paintings were created by ancient Africans on rock faces and in caves. These can be seen in abundance in the Drakensberg Mountain Range in South Africa, where some 30,000 rock drawings have been found. Early paintings show images of humans and animals as well as scenes from ancient Africans' daily lives. These paintings evolved into more abstract works over time. For instance, the San (Bushmen) would later produce artwork that would interestingly and highly abstractly depict spirits (African Facts, n. d.). Figures 1 serves as an illustration of rock painting.



**Figure 1: Rock Painting – Herdsmen**

**Source: (African Art history, Algeria)**

Architecture is the field which remarkable achievement has been made in Africa. However, until recently it was the subject which was not much talked about or studied. Typical examples of African Architecture are homes of the Fali of Northern Cameroun and Traditional Ashanti Architecture. It is usually difficult to decide where mere buildings end and architecture begins (Willett, 1989). Two types of art, textiles and weights, can help one comprehend the nature and development of African art history by providing some historical order. The earliest textile fragments were discovered in Igbo-Ukwu and date to the ninth century AD, while cotton and woolen clothing that had been preserved since the eleventh century was discovered in Mali's Tellam cave. Small cast copper and bronze gold weights in all shapes, including those of humans, animals, fruits, and abstract geometric shapes, were produced by the Akan of Ghana beginning in the 18th century. The cast weight stood as little figurine, many less than 5cm high and expressed a liveliness and spontaneity not often found in African sculpture. Figure 2 shows examples of gold weights.



**Figure 2: Gold Weights Ghana/Cote d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast)**

**Source: Quarcoopome, 1997**

Animal forms expand this subgenre of proverbial images in Figure 2. Each motif is invested with philosophical meaning. Thus, the Art Institute's monkey and catfish gold weights (at right and bottom in illustration, respectively) may evoke the following sayings: first, "The monkey says, 'If you fill my cheeks with food, then I shall reveal the truth and tell you,'" which suggests that truth-speaking may be conditioned by well-being (Quarcoopome, 1997). Hand loomed cloth is produced in Africa by designated members of the community who work in numerous kinds of raw materials and techniques to fulfil a number of different functions. In West Africa,

cloth is made of wool, cotton, silk and combinations of these materials. They are generally woven on narrow strip looms. Textiles are made into blankets or large cloths by sewing the strips together side by side. Colours or patterns may be dyed or woven into the fabric. Sometimes they are applied with paints. The textile may communicate ethnic affiliation, ritual function or the age, sex or marital status of the wearer (Warren and Ingram, 1989). Figures 3 is an examples of hand loomed fabric.



**Figure 3: Men's Wrapper (Kente) Ghana; Akan**  
Source: Quarcoopome, 1997

Wood Sculpture (carving) till today remains the primary sculpture art form of Sub-Saharan Africa. The oldest surviving Sub-Saharan sculpture was a zoomorphic discovered in 1928 in Central Angola, according to African art history. The earliest wooden sculptures from the 17th century are believed to have originated in Koba, Central Zaire. The artifact, which dates to the eighth or ninth century, has survived being buried beneath the water table. The most beautiful surviving examples of wood carving are from circa 1920. Before 1945, when tribal art was still widely used, several collectors began their collections as early as 1890. Various forms of wood sculpture exist in Africa; they range from stools, fertility dolls, and musical instruments to household utensils. Refer to Figures 4 and 5 for examples of wood sculpture.



**Figure 4: Ceremonial Stool - Ghana; Akan**  
Source: Quarcoopome, 1997

The stool in Figure 4 combines two distinct types. The first is the two-tiered, abstract form called *obi te obi so dwa* (one-sits-on-top-of-another stool). The Akan social hierarchy, which consists of people of various ranks cooperating in peace, is graphically communicated and validated by this imagery. The second or lower tier is reminiscent of the *adenkyemdwa*

(crocodile seat) stool form and has two crocodile designs on the front and back. This is an early or mid-twentieth century Wood, brass which measures 43.8 x 62.2 x 32.4 cm (Quarcoopome, 1997).



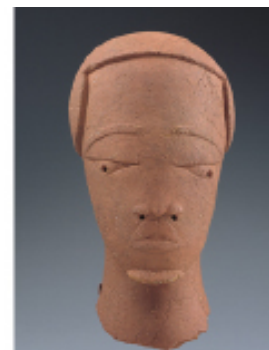
**Figure 5: Akuaba Doll; Akan**  
Source: Warren and Ingram (1989)

The images in Figure 5 are dolls carried by girls and women to induce their ability to conceive and ensure the beauty of their offspring. They symbolize fertility and Asante idea of beauty (Warren & Ingram, 1989).

Terracotta pottery heads, the most of which are remnants of Nok culture figures from Nigeria and date from roughly 500 BC to 200 AD, are the earliest known examples of clay sculpting. They are all formed of grog and iron clay, but none of them have ever been discovered in their natural environment. They show that powerful abstract figural representation has been present in Africa for more than 2,500 years. They mark the beginning of the African sculptural tradition because to its powerful formal features and emotive qualities. They stand out for their sense of caricature and strong sense of fashion, which is seen in their elaborate hairstyles and decorations as in Figure 6. Refer to another example of clay sculpture in Figure 7



**Figure 6: Nok male Figure, Northern Nigeria**  
Source: (Kimbell Collection)



**Figure 7: Nok Head, Northern Nigeria**  
Source: (Kinbell Collection)



According to African Facts (n. d.), African mask are one of the best-known art forms of the people of Africa. It is contended that, any museum display on African Art would be incomplete without displaying the beautiful masks produced by the Sub-Saharan Africans. Most of the masks were made out of wood and many were used in ceremonies. The observation is that most of the older masks especially those that were produced by wood were destroyed by water, rot and termites which are prevalent in Africa. Two such masks are the Senufo and Chiwara masks presented in Figures 8 and 9 respectively.



**Figure 8: Senufo Mask**  
**Source: (Metropolitan Museum of Art  
 New York City)**

The Senufo of northern Côte d'Ivoire produce a rich variety of sculptures, mainly associated with Poro, a society guided by a female ancestral spirit known as “the Ancient Mother.” All adult Senufo men belong to Poro, and the society maintains the continuity of religious and historical traditions. During initiation, young men are instructed through the use of sculptural figures. Some with massive bases are carried in procession by initiates, who swing them from side to side and strike the earth to call ancestral spirits to join the rites (African Facts, n. d.).



**Figure 9: Two Bambara Chiwara (Female and Male)**  
**Source: Art Institute of Chicago**

The stylistic variations in Bambara art are extreme sculptures, masks and headdresses display either stylized or realistic features, and either weathered or encrusted patinas. Until quite recently, the function of Bambara pieces was shrouded in mystery, but in the last twenty years field studies have revealed that certain types of figures and headdresses were associated with a number of the societies that structure Bambara life (African Facts, n. d.). The 15<sup>th</sup> Century saw the Yorubas of Nigeria creating heads that are made of brass in Benin. These were ornaments made on the trade route and were carried in the form of vessels. The works of these two cultures were often produced for Kings and had magical powers. They often reflected their beliefs and socio-political organizations and chiefdoms which existed under the rule of a divine King or Ife (African Art History, n. d.). They also made images of deities or symbols of state in iron and brass and empowered sculptural objects known as 'bo'. An example of such sculptural forms is; the *Benin Bronze* shown in figure 10.



**Figure10: Benin Bronze**  
 Source: African Art History (n. d.)

The subject of Tribal Art is the human body; however, this subject matter lends itself to philosophical abstractions. These ingredients according to African Facts (n. d.) may be limited to parts of the body but are constantly re-assembled in new dimensions. As further opined, from a central axis of eyes, nose, mouth, navel and genital organs to the peripheral cast list of hair, ears, arms, breast, legs and buttocks, there is no prediction which of these elements will take the starring roles in any one production. Startling unbalance is restored to balance by the force of strong design. With the greatly increased attention that has been paid to African Art since the beginning of the century and particularly during the last four decades the term African Art has been applied to categories of objects that bear only the most tenuous and superficial

relationship to what is today recognised as one of the great artistic traditions of humankind. (Warren & Ingram, 1989). In Ghana 'Akan' is an ambiguous term. One school of thought interprets it with an Akan expression 'Kan(e)' which is translated (first and foremost). This is to buttress the belief that they were the first settlers of Ghana. Another school of thought explains it to connote superiority (The first among equals). This interpretation is also supported by an Akan expression *animguase mfata ɔkaniba*. Literally translated as (the Akan is above reproach) (Kyeremateng, 2008). As of 2022, Akans make up the largest ethnic group in Ghana, occupying eight (Central, Western North, Western, Eastern, Ashanti, Bono, Bono East, and Ahafo) of the sixteen (16) administrative regions. As a result, Akan is widely spoken and understood throughout Ghana, and it is quickly becoming the national language. Although there are local variations, Akans as Kinsmen have various political, social, religious, and cultural institutions. There is evidence that the culture passed down through generations by Ghanaian ancestors from the north will be lost simply because the current generation is actively murdering the Akan language by forbidding their children from speaking, reading, or writing it (Singaparee, 2013).

Akan art is diverse and well-known, particularly for the practice of producing bronze and gold weights using the lost wax casting technique. The legendary tales known as *Anansesem* are one of the Akan's most distinctive characteristics. The phrase literally means "the spider narrative." Sometimes these "Spider legends" are also referred to as *Nyankosem*, which means "speech of a sky god." *Kwaku Ananse*, a trickster spirit who is frequently shown as a spider, almost usually serves as the stories' main character. The following are some of the elements of Akan culture; kente, adinkra, *sankɔfa*, Akan gold weights, Akan names, Akan chieftaincy, Akan calendar, Akan religion, Akan art, *Ɔware*, sign language, Akan philosophy and inheritance including: *Abusua (Mogya)* – what an Akan inherits from the mother, *Ntorɔ* – what an Akan gets from the father, - what an Akan develops from their interaction with the world, *Kra* – what an Akan gets from *Onyame* (God). The Akan's propensity for political centralization that emphasizes the power of chiefs is far more significant for this issue. There are positions in the intricate system of positions beneath the chief (*Ohene*) that have long been associated with specific dynastic lines. These include war captains (*asafohene*) and priests (*Okomfo*) Because of its influential role, the chief's court has exerted a magnetic pull on craftspeople, voluntarily or involuntarily attracting some of the best skilled artists and artisans. This has resulted in a critical mass of creative talents (Quarcoopome, 1997). The chief's court is more or less the custodian of Akan art forms. In this regard, the art is communally owned. The communal ownership extends to even the regalia worn by the ruler, whose importance is defined by and accentuated by the works of his community's artist. Quarcoopome (1997), puts the relationship between the arts of the community and the importance of the chief in the following words:

Generally, every Akan chief has a stool, linguist staff, umbrella, headgear, sandals, textiles, and ornaments. The elaborateness of the political emblems, which stand for their technical excellence and valuable materials, such as gold, depends on the ruler's rank and wealth. The hierarchy of power is paralleled by

a hierarchy of visual symbols, to the extent that aesthetic contrasts can distinguish a highly ranked chief from his subordinate.

This revelation emphasises the important role played by art in the Akan culture. According to Appiah (2011), "Akan art is multivalent; it incorporates both figural and abstract forms and draws from a wide variety of motifs," says the artist. He claims that Akan artists use a variety of materials, including expensive and basic, long-lasting and ephemeral ones. The various art forms include sculptures, textiles, architecture, and individualized items made of wood, clay, fibers, precious metals, or for ceremonial or domestic usage. The so-called chieftaincy regalia were first created using common, household skills. For the Akan, art serves more than just aesthetic purposes; it also functions as a component of a sophisticated belief system. Despite being utilitarian, it can nonetheless spark philosophical discussion. For example, according to Quarcoopome (1997);

Akan art articulates and communicates ideas; probes moral precepts; and memorializes the dead. A highly developed verbal tradition plays a distinctive role in Akan culture: dirges recount history; sayings, including proverbs, teach because they encapsulate wisdom; and poems of praise honour individuals and group accomplishment.

In essence Akan art is an embodiment of the cultural values of the society, either verbal or in visual form. The arts are structural expressions of societal norms, beliefs and aspirations. The arts are used as two-edged swords to correct wrongs in society and to encourage her members to exhibit excellent social behaviours. They are used as media for treating various sicknesses in the society. Art in its varied forms is indispensable in the indigenous treatment of bones in the Akan society and their roles and importance in the therapeutic process are critical. The indigenous therapist employs the Arts at every stage of the treatment process. He employs them during consultation and uses them to diagnose the extent of damage to the bone. The Arts are also used to prescribe cure for the problem and to administer treatment to patients. Unfortunately, the general public is not conscious of the Visual Art forms used in the treatment process. Also not much has been done by way of investigating the religious, psychological and physical significance of the Visual Art Forms in the treatment process. The study seeks to achieve the following objectives:

- i. Describe the tools and materials used in indigenous orthopaedic therapy and classify them into visual art forms.
- ii. Assess the specific roles visual art plays in the indigenous orthopaedic therapeutic process.

## 1. Materials and Methods

The case study approach under the Qualitative research method was adopted for this study. Observation, and interview were instruments used to collect data from the centre visited. The

population for the study comprised orthopaedic centre from an Akan Region of Ghana, patients and cured patients from the selected indigenous orthopaedic centre, Western Medical Practitioners associated with the centre and knowledgeable people on the subject in the community visited. Purposive sampling procedure was adopted for this study because the various categories of respondents had the requisite knowledge and skills required to provide the necessary data. Again, the data collected was in a form that could be richly described, explained, and assessed. In line with these objectives the Ashanti Region of Ghana was selected. This region was selected because it is large in size, centrally located and cosmopolitan in nature. The centre sampled for the study is called *God is the Healer*. The centre is noted for its good track record and heavily patronised by patients. It also has dealings with the orthopaedic units of Okomfo Anokye Teaching Hospital in Kumasi. An Orthodox Medical practitioner associated with the centre was consulted to explain his role in the therapeutic processes. Knowledgeable opinion leader on the subject in the catchment areas was also sampled and given the opportunity to express his view on the indigenous orthopaedic industry. In all eleven (11) people were sampled for the study. The breakdown is as follows; (1) indigenous orthopaedic therapist and one (1) assistant, four (4) patients, three (3) cured patients, one (1) Orthodox Medical Practitioner and one (1) knowledgeable opinion leader. The distribution of the sample is represented graphically in Table 1.

**Table 1: Sample Distribution of Respondents**

Sample Frame	Sample Size	Percentage (%)
Indigenous Orthopaedic Therapist and Assistant	2	18
Indigenous Orthopaedic Patients	4	37
Cured Patients	3	27
Orthodox Medical Practitioner	1	9
Knowledgeable Opinion Leaders	1	9
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100</b>

An observation checklist was prepared and used as a guide to directly observe the activities at the Indigenous orthopaedic centres. The materials used by the indigenous practitioners were observed as well as the physical well-being and state of mind of cured patients. Pictures were taken as back-up for later review and analysis. Individuals and groups were also interviewed to attain rich, personalized information. The face-to-face interview was used for the study because some of the respondents could not read and write. The respondents were categorised into five samples as indicated in Table 1 while the Semi-structured Interview Schedules were designed and varied to suit the various categories of respondents. Audio-tape recorder was used to keep track of details of respondents' responses and comments and were later transcribed for analysis. Consequently, data from the centre was critically examined and categorised according to research questions. The data was presented and analysed according to themes.

### 3.0 Results and Discussion

The respondents were grouped into two. The first group was made up of the indigenous orthopaedic therapist and assistant. The second group comprised the indigenous orthopaedic patients, orthodox medical practitioner and knowledgeable opinion leader who contributed to the study. The elements of the demographics of the second group were; *gender, age range, educational background, religious background and ethnic background*. These are presented in **Tables 2, and 3**. From the educational background of the people, it could be observed from table 3 that a majority of the respondents are literates which contributed significantly to the results of the study. Again, the religious affiliation of the respondents were purposefully made to vary in order to obtain results from diverse religious perspectives. Although from different religious backgrounds, this had no influence on their responses on the subject matter rather than the true situation on grounds.

#### 3.1 Indigenous Orthopaedic Therapist - (God is a Healer Centre)

*God is a healer Centre* is located in Effiduase, in the Ejisu-Juabeng District of the Ashanti Region of Ghana. The name of the therapist is Osman Hamza but was popularly referred to as 'doctor'. He has been practicing for thirty-six (36) years. He has no formal training in traditional healing systems. He served as an apprentice to the father between 1977 and 1979 and took over from the father in 1979 when he died. The father was not motivated by money. His passion was to offer service to humanity in the area of bone and joint treatment. These principles influenced his training. According to Hamza bone treatment is a family speciality which was transferred from the father to him. The father started his practice in Sokoto in Nigeria before relocating to Ghana. Despite the expertise Hamza has acquired over the years, he still attributes the success of his practice to the influence of Allah. The therapist works with a trained male attendant. Refer to Figure 11 for a photograph of an interview granted by Osman Hamza to the lead researcher.



**Figure 11: An Interview with Osman Hamza**

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**Table 2: Gender and Age Distribution of other Respondents**

Respondent	Gender		Age Range	
	Males	Females	Below 30years	Above 30 years
1 Indigenous Orthopaedic Patients	5	2	1	6
2 Orthodox Medical Practitioner	-	1	-	1
3 Knowledgeable Opinion leader	1	-	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>8</b>

**Table 3: Educational, Religious and Ethnic Distribution of other Respondents**

Respondent	Educational Background	Religious Affiliation	Ethnicity
1 Indigenous Orthopaedic Patients	Illiterates and educated people	Christians, Muslims and Traditionalists	Akan, Ewe and Mole Dagbani
2 Orthodox Medical Practitioner	Staff registered Nurse	Christian	Akan
3 Knowledgeable Opinion leader	Educated person	Traditionalist	Akan

### 3.2 Tools and materials used in the therapeutic process among the Akan of Ghana.



**Figure 12: Concoction in Plastic Container**

Figures 12-18 describe the major tools and materials used by Osman Hamza for treating patients in his centre. The tools and materials are further classified under Visual Art forms.

The content of the Plastic container in Figure 12 is the concoction the therapist applies on damaged bones. The container is covered to secure and maintain the strength of the preparation. His preparation is made up of the fat of the following animals: python, cattle and chicken.



**Figure 13: Wooden chair (Stool)**

Figure 13 is the wooden stool the therapist sits on to diagnose and treat patients. It has no rest at the back possibly to allow the therapist to move freely. It is also very low. It has no aesthetic appeal.



**Figure 14: Wooden Bench**



The wooden bench in Figure 14 is very long. The essence of the length is to allow quite a number of people to sit on at a time. It looks very old and quite dilapidated but has been designed to allow it to serve its purpose. The patients use them both as a waiting chair and a treatment seat.



**Figure 15: Carved Wooden Sticks**

Figure 15 is an illustration of specially carved wooden sticks which has been designed to brace broken bones. Even though they are used on the body, the observation is that care has not been taken to make them smooth for aesthetic appeal or to provide comfort for patients. They are usually produced in pairs for effective functioning.



**Figure 16: Wooden Crutches**

Figure 16 is illustration of wooden crutches that are used as a support for patients who suffer bone injury in the legs. It has screws at the ends toward the base that can be adjusted to suit various heights. It is also padded at the top to provide comfort when it is put under the armpit. It is also designed to suit patients of various weights.



**Figure 17: Metal Coal-Pot and Metal cooking Pot**

The metal coal-pot in Figure 17 is designed with four legs to provide effective support and base for various weights. It has a ring at two opposite ends to serve as handle for effective movement. The cooking pot is cylindrical in shape to make it convenient to sit on the coal-pot. It also has a set of rings at the opposite ends for effective handling.



**Figure 18: Plastic Containers and Gas Stove**

Figure 18 displays a plastic container and a gas stove. The plastic containers are of different sizes and different colours. The choice of the size of bucket depends on the function it is supposed to perform. The gas stove is a simple type made of metal. It is more robust as compared to the multiple burners used for domestic purposes.

### **3.3 To what extent are the tools and materials used in the therapeutic process among the Akan of Ghana classified into visual art forms?**

The tools and materials used in the therapeutic process range from drugs that are applied to affected parts of the body, receptacle for storing the drugs and other substances and accessories that help in the preparation of drug and their application to the affected parts of the body.

The drugs used for the bone problems are mainly concoctions prepared from bark of trees, plants, herbs, python fat, cattle fat, chicken fat and shea butter. In some cases, the shea butter is used alone as a medium for massaging the affected area.

The receptacles are mainly calabashes, small plastic bowls, plastic buckets, and metal cooking pots. They are made of various materials such as metal, wood and plastic and come in various shapes, sizes and colours depending on the function they perform. The general observation is that these articles are not properly kept and maintained.

The accessories are the other tools such as metal tripod stand, gas stove, carved sticks, carved wooden mortar, carved wooden, pestle wooden stool, wooden benches, elastic bandages, towels, banner, and signboards. Most of them are produced locally and made of indigenous materials. Majority of the items appear dirty and unkempt. Wooden furniture such as chairs for instance are dilapidated and left at the mercy of the weather. Their selections are based on the personal beliefs and techniques of the therapists.

### ***Classification of Tools and Materials into Visual Art Forms***

Form is one of the seven elements of art. Form is a three-dimensional geometrical figure such as sphere, cube, cylinder, and cone. It allows viewers to mentally capture the work, understand it and attempt to analyze it. Art form for that matter is any medium regarded as having systematized rules, procedures, or formulations (*Webster College Dictionary, 1991*). Visual art forms in this context are in reference to the concrete objects that can be seen and felt by the hand.

The tools and materials employed in the treatment process were classified under Visual Art forms. The categorisation was based on the popular art forms associated with African cultural practices. The visual art forms identified in the study include body painting, metal sculpture, carving, textiles, calabash art and graphic design. Table 4 classifies the tools and materials into Visual Art forms.

**Table 4: Classification of Tools and Materials into Visual Art Forms**

S/N	ART FORM	TOOLS AND MATERIALS
1	<b>Body Painting</b>	Concoction, shea butter.
2	<b>Metal Sculpture</b>	Metal cooking pot, metal tripod stand, metal coal pot, metal gas stove, metal saucepan and metal water containers.
3	<b>Wood Carvings</b>	Carved sticks, carved wooden mortar, carved wooden, pestle wooden stool, wooden benches and wooden crutches.
4	<b>Textiles</b>	Elastic bandage and towel.
5	<b>Calabash Art</b>	Gourd and calabash.

The list below explains the information in Table 4.

- i. **Body Painting:** The tools and materials that are classified under body painting are concoction and shea butter used for treating the bone injuries.
- ii. **Metal Sculpture:** The tools and materials under this category are metal cooking pot, metal tripod stand, metal coal pot, metal gas stove, metal saucepan and metal water containers.
- iii. **Wood Carvings:** Tools and materials under wood carvings include carved sticks, carved wooden mortar, carved wooden pestel, wooden stool and wooden benches.
- iv. **Textiles:** Elastic bandage and towel are the tools that are classified under textiles.
- v. **Calabash Art:** The materials under this category are calabash and gourd.

### 3.4 What is the significance of the Visual Arts in the indigenous orthopaedic treatment process?

Foso (1993) opines that, “the creation of traditional art was inspired by ideas and thoughts common to African life”. The ideas influenced the visual art forms of the people of Africa. The traditional African artist therefore did not follow strict formal rules when it came to art. African art forms were interpreted by the ideas and philosophies of its people. Thus according to Foso (1993), a piece of work was issued from deeper motives than the inspiration of the moment. As a cooperate member of the society, the artist knew and understood fully the intellectual framework within which his works functioned. This philosophy to a large extent influenced the use of art forms in the indigenous therapeutic process.

In the context of the Akan traditional setting, the following criteria was used to analyse the role played by art in the indigenous orthopaedic therapy; cultural considerations for choosing tools and materials, functions of the art forms and their socio-cultural significances to the therapeutic process. The Therapist at this centre based his choice of tools and substances on several factors. He took into consideration; the perceived spiritual force causing the bone defect, the location of the fracture, the nature of the bone injury and in some cases the age and sex of the patient. The criterion was not dependant on any scientific explanation but was attributed to his personal experience over the years. The selection also took into consideration the cultural values and sensitivities of the society he operated in. This is because according to the therapist, the success of the industry depended largely on the cooperation of the immediate society that is his marketing agent.

The therapist also balanced cost with efficiency, because at the end of the day he was mindful of offering services which are efficient and also cheap. In the light of this, he selects his raw materials from the immediate environment. His concoctions are carefully prepared with ingredients that have very powerful medicinal values. This notwithstanding, he backed the physical preparation with spiritual support because of his belief in the Akan concept of healing. The role played by the individual visual art forms are analysed as follows:

### 3.4.1 Body Painting

The materials that come under body painting are concoction and shea butter. *God is the Healer Centre* produces his concoction with herbs, python fat, chicken fat and cattle fat. The shea butter is an off- white or ivory-coloured fat extracted from the nut of the African shea tree (*Vitellaria paradoxa*). It is usually supplied by the therapist.

The concoction is the most critical substance used by the indigenous therapist. As a body painting material, the concoction is applied to the affected part of the body where the bone is damaged. Their systematic application and the marks they leave on the body can best be described as body painting. The concoction is the major drug that heals the bones physically. It is believed that the herbs and other substances used to formulate the concoction contain spiritual powers that cast away any spell or spiritual influence associated with the injury. After treatment, the concoction leaves stains on the body. These stains however, go off the body with time.

### 3.4.2 Metal Sculpture

The tools that fall under metal sculpture are metal cooking pot, metal coal pot/tripod stand, metal gas stove, metal saucepan and metal water containers. These tools are produced by local metal artists who in turn sell them directly to the therapist or display them on the open market for purchase. The uses of these tools are crucial to the treatment processes, The coal pot/tripod stand, and metal gas stove were used for setting fire. The metal cooking pot/metal saucepan is then placed on the fire to boil water for massaging the affected area. The metal bucket/container serves as a container for keeping water and other liquids at the centre. It is curious to note that, despite the advent of technology and the invention of gas stove which is more user-friendly for making fire, the indigenous therapist still uses the traditional coal pot for setting fire. He uses the gas stove once a while during emergencies. This is done when it rains, and the open space cannot be used for setting fire.

The centre admitted that the choice was based purely on cultural and economic considerations. This claim was corroborated by knowledgeable opinion leaders who linked the reason to a proverb in Akan which says, *Amamrɛ wɔ hɔ yi yɛnto ntwene*. When translated literary it means, “We do not throw away tradition”.

### 3.4.3 Carvings

The tools under carvings are: carved sticks, carved wooden mortar (Wadru), carved wooden pestle (wɔma), wooden stool and wooden benches. It is instructive to observe that all these carvings are made of wood. This is typical of the belief by the Akans that ‘Trees’ or ‘Plants’ have medicinal values and that, they possess spiritual powers that can facilitate healing of

individuals. The therapist could however not name any particular wood or trees that possess those spiritual powers. He explained that it was the preserve of the carvers. The therapist acquires the carved tools from local wood carvers and wood makers popularly referred to as carpenters.

The carved wooden sticks are used to brace the affected part of the body to keep the two ends of the affected bone in line. This is done before bandaging so that the joint of the bones will fit perfectly. The wooden 'motar' is used as a receptacle for pounding the herbs and bark of trees into powdered form and subsequently mixed with water to produce the concoction. The therapist prefers the laborious process of pounding the herbs to grinding them in a machine because the contact with the wood adds medicinal value to the concoction. The wooden stools and benches serve as seat for the therapist and patients respectively. The wooden ones are preferred because presumably they are cheaper than the ones made with other materials. This is besides the powers inherent in the trees used as raw material for the chairs.

#### 3.4.4 Textiles

The items that fall under textiles are rugs, towels, and elastic bandages. The rags and towel are supplied by the therapist. The bandages are usually purchased by the patient for treatment. These items play a crucial role in the treatment process.

The rugs used by the indigenous therapist is usually made of cotton fabrics and the towels are made from cotton pile fabric. The towel is very absorbent and therefore able to hold water for a long time. The towel is soaked with hot water and used to disinfect and massage the affected part of the body before the concoction is applied. The soaked towel is also used to wipe blood deposits from the affected parts of the body. The cotton fabrics are used as rug to clean water and other liquids from the tools and the floor. Elastic bandage comes in various types namely, sterile, non-sterile and latex. It was observed that the sterile ones are mostly used to avoid contamination. The bandage is used to hold the bone joints firmly in place and protect the wound from infection. It also helps to hold the concoction firmly on the body.

#### 3.4.5 Calabash Art

The items under Calabash Art come in different forms. There are whole gourds which are not split and are fruits of a family of plants which include cucumbers, melons, and loofahs. There are also calabashes which are the product of a tropical tree which belongs to the family of *Bignoniaceae*. It is used artistically in diverse ways around the globe. The gourd is utilized for musical instruments, cups, and containers, while the wood is used for tool handles, boat ribs, and cattle yokes (Ejelonu, et al., 2011). Calabash fruit has a long history of use as an anti-diabetic treatment in some parts of the world (Juee & Naqishbandi, 2020). In Ghana, the calabash is usually split into two and used as a container for storing various products at the indigenous centre. The gourd is also used as a container for storing cereals and other ingredients used to prepare the concoction.

*God is the Healer* preferred the plastic containers because in his opinion the plastic is cleaner and more durable. The plastics do not break easily and are able to withstand harsh weather conditions. The therapist believes that the calabash has the power to resist any spiritual influence on its content. The concoction is therefore stored in calabashes and transferred into plastic containers for application.

#### 4. Conclusion

The choice of tools and substances for indigenous orthopaedic therapy is based on several factors. The indigenous therapists take into consideration; the perceived spiritual force that caused the bone defect, the location of the fracture and the nature of the bone injury. The age and sex of the patients and the cultural values and sensitivities of the Akan society are also taken into consideration in the selection of tools and materials.

The tools and materials used for indigenous orthopaedic treatment were classified into visual art forms. The visual art forms comprised body painting, metal sculpture, wood carving, textiles and calabash. As an indigenous practice whose roots are embedded in the culture of the people; it has medical, cultural, economic as well as spiritual significance. The roles played by art forms go to the core of indigenous orthopaedic therapy. The study therefore recommends that the visual art forms used for the treatment processes should be codified, documented, and developed into manual for art education.

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